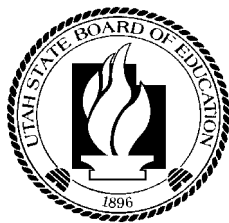


**Report of the  
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Cottonwood High School  
5715 South 1300 East  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84121**

**October 5-6, 2004**



Utah State Office of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
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**THE REPORT OF THE  
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Cottonwood High School  
5715 South 1300 East  
Salt Lake City, Utah 84121**

**October 5-6, 2004**

**UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION**

**Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF  
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**Salt Lake City, Utah**

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## **FOREWORD**

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, October 5-6, 2004, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Cottonwood High School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Garrett Muse is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Cottonwood High School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Cottonwood High School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction

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8/1/2004

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Craig Stoker .....	Director Applied Technology Education
Robert Ward .....	Supervisor School Lunch

# COTTONWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

## ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

### School Administration

Dr. Garrett Muse ..... Principal  
Dr. Mary Rhodes..... Assistant Principal  
Scott Sharp ..... Assistant Principal

### Counseling

Richard Schmeling..... Counselor  
Judy Liapis..... Counselor  
Peggy Allsop..... Counselor  
Tina Creel..... Counselor  
Dick Palmer ..... Career Counselor

### Support Staff

Julie Bagley  
Becky Koehler

Rick Schiebe  
Claudia Sundberg

Michelle Walker

### Faculty

Vicki Aiello  
Peggy Allsop  
Cheri Ause  
Patty Bergstrom  
Bob Berrett  
Chris Black  
Julie Buhler  
Phil Cannon  
Sandra Catten  
Ed Christy  
Krehl Cook  
Tina Creel  
Ed Duncan  
Scott Fowler  
Diana Gardner

Marilyn Greenwood  
Ann Harrison  
Anne Hawes  
Rita Heagren  
Lynnette Helotes  
Denise Hodges  
Jon Hoover  
Dennis Hummer  
Dallas Jackman  
Jeff Jackson  
William Laursen  
Judy Liapis  
Larry Ludlow  
Cory Martin  
Helen McNally

Ellie Miller  
Carol Morga  
Audrey Nelson  
Dick Palmer  
Leanne Patton  
Bryan Pavlish  
Linda Peake  
Susan Perkins  
Rand Perrier  
Erin Pike  
Brad Pino  
Linda Postman  
Dana Ricketts  
Richard Schmeling  
Randy Stevens

Klint Stevenson  
Linda Taylor  
Amber Tuckness

Corey Tuckness  
Doug Wagstaff  
Carol Watson

Stephanie Wynder

# **COTTONWOOD HIGH SCHOOL**

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Students Prepared for the World

## **BELIEF STATEMENTS**

The goal of education is to foster independent thinkers who are inquisitive, logical, and critical and to develop students who are decision makers and problem solvers. It is our resolve to:

- Increase student work ethic and raise the level of achievement
- Provide students with opportunities to enhance future educational and career choices
- Integrate the learning process for students and help them discover application in real life
- Emphasize responsibility, respect, and cooperation among members of the Cottonwood Community
- Increase professional awareness of and means of addressing diverse student populations
- Evaluate and adjust methods and practice
- Increase teacher collaboration, professional learning, peer coaching, and research of new ideas
- Increase staff and community involvement in the decision-making process of the school
- Increase parental involvement in student education
- Analyze data, review information, and address discrepant achievement to insure student success

## **MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

Gloria Merrill, Director, Career Technical Education/Curriculum, Murray School District, Visiting Team Chairperson

Marsha Forsgren, Uintah High School, Uintah School District

Marsha Morgan, Copper Hills High School, Jordan School District

Mary Moulton, Uintah High School, Uintah School District

Brooke Noall, Highland High School, Salt Lake City School District

Janice Jones Schroeder, Supervisor, Multicultural Education and World Languages, Salt Lake City School District

## REPORT OF THE VISITING TEAM

### COTTONWOOD HIGH SCHOOL

#### CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Cottonwood High School is an urban high school of 1,400 students. This figure has declined over the last seven years from 1,870. Granite School District data shows a similar decline in enrollment in recent years. Cottonwood High School employs between 50 and 55 teachers, depending on student population and fluctuating district allotments. Cottonwood High School students benefit from the instruction of a particularly well educated, experienced administration, Counseling Department, and faculty. Students are regularly recognized for achievement through a number of programs.

No single geographical entity defines which students will attend Cottonwood High School. Most students live in three separate Salt Lake County cities. Students to the east and southeast of Cottonwood High School reside in Holladay; those who live between 45<sup>th</sup> and 66<sup>th</sup> South along the corridor between 9<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> East have a Murray address; and a third group of students come to Cottonwood High School from the west side of the valley, in an area extending from 47<sup>th</sup> to 66<sup>th</sup> South and from 27<sup>th</sup> West to the Bangerter Highway. The school also serves a large population (exact number unknown) of students living outside of Granite School District who are on special permit. There are students enrolled at Cottonwood High School from 17 different zip codes.

The racial composition of Cottonwood High School is predominately white. However, the school community is beginning to change, and the Hispanic/Latino population is the fastest-growing minority population. English is not the primary language spoken at home by 8 to 15 percent of Cottonwood High School students.

a) *What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of their profile?*

The administration and school leadership team examined the ACT, SAT, CRT, and AP testing data for three years. Based on this data, Cottonwood High School students are achieving at or above district and state averages and have been showing gains in performance each year since the most recent edition of the test was introduced. Cottonwood High School is recognized for a strong academic program. In addition, Cottonwood High School reviewed data from the U.S. Census Bureau to better understand the differences in the three main communities in which Cottonwood High Students reside.

b) *What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?*

The Visiting Team encourages Cottonwood High School to continue its effort to systemically collect and analyze pertinent student data to recognize who is learning and who is not learning. The data gathered could also guide decisions made by the school. This gathering effort should include data not currently included in the school profile, such as disaggregated attendance records, tardy records, incidence reports, UBSCT scores, course grades, dropout rates, etc. For example, which gender, grade, or ethnic group is most likely to have students drop out? Once this information is available, it can guide decision making regarding professional development, expenditure of resources, and development of special programs.

In addition, by using disaggregated data, the school leadership team, faculty, and stakeholders could identify student achievement gaps by subgroup (i.e., gender, grade level, socioeconomic status, special education, ELL) and monitor the effectiveness of school improvement activities with the subgroups over time. It may also be helpful for individual departments to collect data in order for the faculty members to better understand their students.

It is suggested that the school leadership team collaborate with the district in designing an effective data management system that can be utilized by different stakeholders within the school community.

#### **Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:**

- Cottonwood High School recognizes the need to collect and analyze data in order to improve decisions regarding school improvement. The Visiting Team recommends that Cottonwood High School expand its collection of data related to who is learning and who is not learning.
- In analyzing data, the staff could pursue possible correlations between student achievement and other measures of student success, such as attendance, course grades, UBSCT tests, and even participation in school activities. Some guiding questions should be considered when collecting data. Further inquiry could include questions such as: “Do we have students who attend regularly, but are not performing? Are high achieving students making yearly progress? Are students who participate in school activities more likely to achieve? Are there patterns and trends in attendance and achievement that can be attributed to a certain grade level and gender, grade level and ethnicity, or grade level and subject area?”
- Cottonwood High School’s leadership team should consider using the information gleaned from the data analysis to drive future decisions regarding professional development, curriculum development, and student assessment within the school.

## CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent has the school community engaged in a collaborative self-study process on behalf of students?*

There is clear evidence of a highly organized and energized effort to gather, analyze, and share student data with the faculty.

As the Visiting Team interviewed faculty, staff, parents, students, and community members, it was apparent that some stakeholders were not involved in the process.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The Visiting Team believes that Cottonwood High School's self-study accurately reflects the school's strengths. It is the flagship high school for forensics, as well as visual and performing arts. Cottonwood has an enviable amount of parent support and a capable, caring staff. The self-study did not reveal the school's limitations.

The departmental reports were written in a positive voice, but lack candor regarding areas that need attention. The Visiting Team would suggest that each department spend time studying best practices and then review the National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) rubrics. This would allow each department to clearly understand its present level, and would help the department set goals for future improvement.

## CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Cottonwood High School's desired results for student learning (DRSLs) are as follows:

1. Literacy and Communication
2. Numeracy
3. Imperiled Population Support
4. Character Development

### **Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:**

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The Visiting Team compliments the school leadership team on guiding the faculty and staff through an effective consensus-building process regarding the school's beliefs, mission, and goals. The Visiting Team would suggest that a more conscientious effort be made to solicit feedback from students, parents, and other community members so the school goals will more accurately reflect the needs of a growing population of culturally diverse learners.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

Cottonwood High School's mission statement is succinct and supported by students and staff. Most of the belief statements focus on student learning. The belief statements should be shared with all stakeholders. The school's belief statements address key issues pertinent to effective decision making and policy development in the school.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The mission statement, beliefs, and desired results for student learning are well aligned. However, while the DRSLs are admirable, they are not easily measurable, and some of the goals could not be attained within a reasonable time line. The faculty and staff do not have a clear definition of the "imperiled student" or a clear understanding of their role in helping such students.

### **Curriculum Development:**

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

There is evidence that some of the departments are aligned with or are in the process of aligning with the Utah State Core. One common concern expressed by the faculty is a need to provide teachers with quality time to collaborate. Cottonwood High School uses a wide range of test scores, particularly results of Advanced Placement and CRT tests, to evaluate and renew its curriculum.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

The Visiting Team commends the staff for incorporating innovative curriculum design that engages student learning. Math and science faculty members should be commended for their creation of the Math/Physics blocks that directly address the school's DRSLs.

While the DRSLs are posted in each classroom, there is not a shared vision that transcends all departments on how the DRSLs will affect an individual teacher's curriculum, instructional strategies, or assessment methods. Over time, the DRSLs should be infused and integrated throughout all departments. The creation of departmental goals that align with schoolwide DRSLs will unify the school and hopefully raise the achievement level of all students, including the at-risk students.

#### **Quality Instructional Design:**

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

It is evident that many teachers at Cottonwood High School use a variety of instructional activities to actively engage students in their learning. The Visiting Team compliments the administration on having all teachers trained in sheltered English strategies. The majority of the activities observed during the visit involved direct instruction, class discussions, collaboration, lab activities, self-paced program learning modules, and hands-on activities.

The Visiting Team commends those teachers who use "best practice" activities, and recommends that all teachers continue to expand and experiment with best practices, such as instructional methods that focus on improving individual and interpersonal communication skills.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

The Visiting Team was impressed with the high degree of expertise and dedication of the teaching staff. It is obvious that a variety of instructional strategies are used to ensure that the needs of most learners are met. The gifted learners are obviously challenged. Peer tutoring, mentoring, and other after-school programs are available to students who require additional help.

A greater effort could be made to include most special education students in classrooms where they can receive instruction in the Core Curriculum taught by a

highly qualified teacher. There was some concern expressed by teachers that they felt inadequate to meet the needs of ELL students. The teachers also expressed a desire to receive additional training in meeting the needs of diverse learners. Future professional development in research-based instructional strategies could help all teachers address the needs of all students.

- c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

Many teachers arrive early and stay late to help individual students. In addition, efforts have been made to provide additional opportunities that support student learning, such as the mentoring program and after-school remediation. The school leadership team may want to explore other strategies and programs that could be utilized to address other areas of concern that affect the needs of diverse students.

### **Quality Assessment Systems:**

- a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or schoolwide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Following numerous observations, the Visiting Team commends the faculty at Cottonwood High School for utilizing varied forms of assessment (e.g., student portfolios, open-ended questions, oral presentations, projects, research projects, student journals, and group assignments). Some departments at Cottonwood High School have made noticeable efforts to create a variety of assessments that address all learning styles.

Other than standardized testing (CRT, SAT), there is no evidence of schoolwide assessments currently in place. The Visiting Team suggests that each department collaborate on the possibility of creating common assessment tools. In addition, as the school leadership team moves forward with the implementation of the DRSLs, it will be necessary to develop common performance standards that can be implemented and assessed throughout the school.

- b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

Some faculty members use a variety of assessment methods on a regular basis. There is limited evidence that these tools are being used by the majority of teachers. As the Visiting Team discussed assessment at Cottonwood High School with the various stakeholders, it appeared that classroom assessment focused on establishing a student's grade rather than determining the student's knowledge and understanding of a standard.

The Visiting Team would suggest that each department consider developing common assessments at the end of each semester to identify students' progress. Using a common assessment would help identify students who are failing and allow each department to reflect on methods to improve student achievement.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

According to the students at Cottonwood High School, assessment tools are fair and equitable. However, the Visiting Team recommends that the staff (possibly within departments) investigate and develop performance standards and assessment tools for judging students' knowledge and understanding of core standards. These tools should include essential knowledge and skill identification for all learning styles, including diverse learners.

### **Leadership for School Improvement:**

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

Students feel valued and important at Cottonwood High School, and the teachers truly care about their students. The school has a long tradition of academic excellence.

The Visiting Team commends the administration for the implementation of a monthly block of time for professional development. This time has proven to be productive for the faculty. The CRISS Training is one example of professional development at Cottonwood High School that is aligned with the Literacy DRSL. The faculty received the training, but its implementation across the curriculum was not evident.

The school leadership team may want to embrace the CRISS philosophy and provide faculty members with ongoing, in-depth training in the CRISS principles of Textbook Analysis, Discussion Strategies, Active Strategies for Learning and Organizing, Writing Strategies, and Vocabulary Development. This training could provide opportunities for faculty discussion as a group, as departments, and as cross-curricular groups.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

There is a consensus among the Cottonwood High School administration and faculty that more time is needed for collaboration and the sharing of effective teaching methods from within the ranks of this talented teaching staff.

Professional development is evident, but does not appear to be directly related to data about who is learning and who is not learning at Cottonwood High School. The Visiting Team recommends that more data, particularly as it relates to diverse learners, be gathered, and that responsive professional development models be pursued. For example, the profile included AP exams given, but did not include the number of tests passed in each subject—and the information was not disaggregated by gender or ethnicity.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

Cottonwood High School does not have an organized system to monitor student achievement and instructional effectiveness. The school leadership team may need to develop a subcommittee that collects and reviews data from departments, counselors, attendance records, and administrators, as well as standardized testing data. Once the data is gathered, the most pertinent information should be shared with all stakeholders.

Cottonwood High School could also provide training for all faculty members in the creation of meaningful assessments of student learning. As departments and individual faculty members begin to collect and disaggregate data, they may see the need to modify instruction and assessment practices.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

Students, parents, and faculty and staff members feel safe at Cottonwood High School. During interviews with students, the Visiting Team discovered that students were proud that Cottonwood has the tradition of welcoming and accepting all students. The members of the administrative team work well together, and they have earned the respect and support of the students, faculty, and staff.

Some of the schoolwide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school's beliefs and mission, and are designed to maximize opportunities for successful learning.

- e) *To what extent does the leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

All of the administrators should be equally involved with the school improvement process so that they are unified in making decisions that support the mission,

beliefs, and goals of the school. Currently the allocation and use of resources are usually aligned with the school's DRSLs.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

It is obvious that the Cottonwood High School community acknowledges and appreciates the leadership of this school. Students feel comfortable approaching the administration, and appreciate the administrative support they receive in all of their efforts. The administration is to be commended that the accreditation process has brought the entire faculty together. The school leadership team and administration may want to encourage the School Community Council to become more involved in the improvement process.

### **Community Building:**

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

Students, faculty members, and parents all agree that the academic climate at Cottonwood High Schools supports teaching and learning. Students feel valued, and there are many student recognition programs in place. There is some evidence of community/parent outreach and involvement. Due to the increase in Cottonwood High School's ELL and ethnic minority student populations, the school may want to explore ways to make the parents of these students feel welcome. It may be helpful to include parents representing all subgroups in the decision-making process.

Cottonwood High School has created a comfortable learning environment. The administration may want to increase the cultural sensitivity of faculty and students through training such as REACH or Anytown.

The PTSA will be sending quarterly newsletters to every home this year. Through this newsletter, all parents can become informed on the school mission, beliefs and goals. The administration could explore having the newsletter and other important written communications translated for the parents of ELL students.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

Every teacher at Cottonwood High School has been trained in sheltered English strategies, and the majority of faculty members make a sincere effort to meet the academic needs of all students. The ELL teacher works very hard to track the

ELL students and communicate the students' needs to the faculty. However, there has been very little effort to involve all stakeholders in supporting student learning. The school may want to have student groups discuss ways to reach all students. The administration could lead the parent organizations in discussing ways to involve minority parents and improve communication with all parents.

Many students at Cottonwood High School ride a school bus long distances to and from school. These students may have a difficult time participating in after-school remediation programs or extracurricular activities. The administration could possibly arrange for two activity buses to run at different times to allow all students to access the after-school programs.

### **Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:**

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

Professional development programs are provided for the staff, but the focus is not always clear and not always linked to the achievement of the school's goals for improvement as outlined in the action plans or the DRSLs. The Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning focus group, however, recommends in its report that the group should continue to function to "assess, develop, and oversee" continuous improvement activities.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

The school's organizational culture supports school improvement initiatives and professional development. Cottonwood High School's faculty is encouraged to take advantage of subject area workshops and in-service opportunities offered by district, state, and national sources. The school sponsors a number of continuous improvement activities and is enthusiastic about the possibility of more. The mentoring program is an example of a very successful program that has improved student learning by connecting at-risk students with a faculty mentor.

## **CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI**

### **Standard I – Educational Program**

This standard is met. Cottonwood High’s instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the DRSLs and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

### **Standard II – Student Personnel Services**

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The assigned group of personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for every 400 students enrolled.

### **Standard III – School Plant and Equipment**

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs, and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

### **Standard IV – Library Media Program**

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information.

### **Standard V – Records**

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such records, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

### **Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)**

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

### **Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel**

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the State of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

### **Standard VIII – Administration**

This standard is met. The administration of Cottonwood High School provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

### **Standard IX – Teacher Load**

This standard is not met. Due to the A/B block schedule, some teachers have student loads that exceed 210. As a result of declining enrollment and other factors, the district has decreased Cottonwood High School's FTE for the past three years.

### **Standard X – Activities**

This standard is met. Cottonwood High School supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional experiences and opportunities for learning to take place.

### **Standard XI – Business Practices**

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

## **CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN**

- a) *To what extent is the schoolwide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan attempts to align improvement efforts to the school's DRSLs, rather than addressing student achievement gaps. Additionally, the action plan reflects some of the work of the school's committees rather than focusing on recommendations that surfaced from conducting an in-depth analysis of research-based best practices at both the departmental and organizational levels.

The administration is aware of this concern and will take steps to bring the analysis of the school profile, as well as departmental and focus group analyses, into alignment with the school's action plan.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, schoolwide and systemwide?*

The faculty and administration participated in the development of the school's action plan and strongly support the school improvement process. The current action plan will require some revision to reflect the major recommendations resulting from the site visit.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the schoolwide action plan appear to be?*

The current action plan does not articulate an effective method for monitoring schoolwide improvement in the specific goal areas. The school understands the action plan will require some revision, and is ready to do this. The Visiting Team would encourage the school leadership team to focus on a few very specific measurable goals that will affect student learning in every classroom.

## **CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM**

### **Commendations:**

- Cottonwood High School has a positive academic learning climate where students feel safe, comfortable, and accepted. Member of the administrative staff are commended for their attention and commitment to building a learning community that empowers all stakeholders to participate in school decisions.
- The Visiting Team commends the school leadership team, administration, and faculty for their enthusiastic participation in the self-study process.
- Cottonwood High School has a culture committed to learning and high expectations. The Visiting Team commends the school on a tradition of excellence in academic programs such as the math/physics blocks, AP programs, visual arts, and performing arts.
- The administration, counseling center, and faculty members of Cottonwood High School are to be commended for sincerely caring about students and each other. All students feel that they can succeed.

### **Recommendations:**

- The Visiting Team recommends that Cottonwood High School develop a comprehensive system for gathering, disaggregating, analyzing, and using pertinent data. This process will identify students who are not learning. These

efforts should extend to gathering and using data to monitor and evaluate improvement efforts as they are implemented and refined.

- The Visiting Team recommends that Cottonwood High School involve all stakeholders (parents, business partners, students, administrators, faculty members, and classified employees) in the continuous self-study process.
- The current action plan will require some revision. The whole faculty needs to engage in collective inquiry with regard to research-based best practices and teaching/assessment of the DRSLs. As the school moves to explicitly teaching its DRSLs in all classrooms, the faculty should come to a consensus on how to teach and *assess* literacy and communication, numeracy, imperiled populations, and character development across the curriculum.
- The administrative team, with input from the School Community Council and school leadership team, should develop and implement a multi-year professional development plan that aligns with the DRSLs and addresses the needs of all students.